



Recognising and upholding excellence in local government

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## 2024 State Government Election Candidate Questionnaire

The Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents Inc. (OSCAR) an umbrella group for resident and community groups in the Sunshine Coast and Noosa Local Government areas (LGAs) has a tradition of seeking the views of candidates for State elections on Local Government issues that are partially or wholly the responsibility of the State Government (by way of funding or legislative control).

Your responses, in full, will be published on the OSCAR website for the benefit of our members and the wider community.

We appreciate the fact that you are very busy at this time but we would value receiving your responses on the issues we have identified by **October 16**. Many questions can be answered with a simple Yes or No but the opportunity is there for you to expand your response.

We welcome individual responses from all candidates. Those of you who are members of the same political party may submit a collective response if preferred.

<b>Candidate</b>	Robert Skelton
<b>Electorate</b>	Nicklin
<b>Party</b>	Labor
<b>Date</b>	<b>17 October 2024</b>

## State Planning Issues

1. Will you commit to ensuring there is statutory recognition and protection of the existing regional inter-urban break, between the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay Regional Councils (including Halls Creek)?

Yes, we remain committed to the protection of the Northern Inter-Urban Break (NIUB) between the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay Regional Councils. To fulfill this commitment, we released the statutory regional plan for South East Queensland in 2023 (*ShapingSEQ 2023*), which explicitly recognises the NIUB.

In 2023 the Miles Labor Government amended the Planning Regulation by introducing specific provisions dedicated to safeguarding the SEQ NIUB (*The Planning (SEQ Regulatory Provisions) Amendment Regulation 2023*). This ensures enhanced protection and sets clear criteria for assessing applications that may impact this critical area.

Urban development in Hall Creek is currently prohibited and requires approval under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

5. (a). Will you support the Blue Heart project on 5000 ha of the Maroochy floodplain as a critical response to climate change?

Yes, The Miles Labor Government has committed \$15 million of the \$35.3 million allocated to the Blue Heart project under the SEQ City Deal.

- (b) Will you ensure that funding from the State's Land Restoration Program is continued and is available to landowners within the Maroochy floodplain?

The Miles Labor Government created the \$500 million Land Restoration Fund, which has been independently rated for three years running as Australia's leading carbon and natural capital fund. This funding will continue under a re-elected Labor Government, and as it is now, funding rounds will be available Queensland-wide.

If re-elected, the Miles Labor Government will invest \$140 million to triple the size of Queensland's nature fund and related initiatives, including 23.5 million to fund stewardship payments for landholders who wish to establish private protected areas on their land to incentivise more private protected areas, and \$20 million to help more landholders to profit from conservation and avoiding clearing.

3. As the Planning Act includes forms of planning and development that fall within the scope of "development" in the Economic Development Act, if elected, in the interest of consistency across state legislation, will you commit to amending the Economic Development Act to ensure that the ecological sustainability principles in Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Planning Act are incorporated fully into the Economic Development Act and applied as intended by the Planning Act?

Section 4 of the Economic Development Act requires that the main purpose of the Act is achieved by (among other things)

- i) seeking the achievement of ecological sustainability;
- ii) valuing, protecting and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and tradition; and
- iii) recognising the culture heritage significance of places.

4. The State Government has established a State Facilitated Development (SFD) process to "deliver affordable housing". It allows the state to ignore and override local planning schemes, local councils and the community and removes the right of appeal to the Planning and Environment Court.

Recently the State Government declared an SFD in Noosa Shire in opposition to Noosa Shire Council, its Planning Scheme and against Community Expectations. At its September General Meeting OSCAR member groups voted unanimously that:

*OSCAR calls on the Government, the Opposition, and all standing Candidates to commit to repealing the SFD legislation within 6 months and Rejecting or Suspending all current Applications/designations.*

Will you commit to repealing the SFD legislation and reject or suspend all current applications/designations and undertake negotiations with Councils and the community.

The State Facilitated Development (SFD) process is focused on delivering much-needed affordable housing on the Sunshine Coast and across Queensland. The 11 declared SFD proposals will go through a rigorous assessment or community consultation process. The SFD process mandates at least 15% affordable housing, with some projects committing over 25%, and even up to 89% in certain cases. This could yield thousands of much-needed affordable homes on the Sunshine Coast and across Queensland.

We commit to engaging in constructive dialogue with local councils and communities to refine the SFD process. We will ensure that current SFD proposals undergo thorough assessment and consultation, enabling us to evaluate their effectiveness in delivering affordable housing while ensuring community interests are considered.

5. In relation to the finalised Sunshine Coast Airport Development Scheme finalised by EDQ on Friday 27 September 2024: will you commit to the stated objective of "no worsening for existing communities around the airport", by guaranteeing that ALL infrastructure (road and drainage) will be in place in time to manage non-aviation development impacts?

The Sunshine Coast Airport is required to negotiate an infrastructure agreement with the Sunshine Coast City Council to ensure the infrastructure delivery supports the broader network as well as what is required for development within the airport precinct.

6. Given the significant and diverse implications of Climate Change for this region and the State as a whole, what emissions reduction and renewable energy targets and associated timeframes do you commit to for Queensland, and what detailed plans do you have to achieve those targets?

We are committed to protecting our climate and biodiversity for future generations to come, unlike the opposition, who have no plan to address climate change in Queensland.

Our plan is to replace coal with 80% renewables by 2035, and we have made that law.

This means both cleaner and cheaper energy as we turn to Queensland's natural and free resources like the sun and wind, supported by deep-storage pumped hydro to power our state.

Work is well underway at both publicly owned pumped hydro sites, the 2,000MW Borumba project and the 5,000MW Pioneer-Burdekin project.

In fact, the Miles Labor Government's first budget invests \$26 billion to deliver new wind, solar, batteries, pumped hydro, and the transmission infrastructure required to connect renewables to homes, businesses and our industrial regions.

Delivering these projects means delivering emission reduction targets that have now been legislated under our Labor Government - 75% emissions reduction target by 2035, and net zero by 2050.

To date, Queensland has delivered a greater reduction in emissions than any other state, reducing emissions by 35.3%.

This has been achieved largely due to the restoration of sensible vegetation management laws after they were axed by the Newman LNP government, with much the same front bench as today's Crisafulli LNP opposition.

We are well on our way to achieving 75% by 2035, but that is all at risk under an LNP government.

The LNP has confirmed they will keep coal fired power stations open indefinitely and will repeal our legislated renewable energy targets.

Peter Dutton has also said that the first step to expensive and waste producing nuclear plants in Queensland is the election of a Crisafulli LNP Government.

The Smart Energy Council has said that 750,000 Queensland homes could have their solar switched off under the LNP's nuclear plan.

## Social and Affordable Housing

7. What do you see are the issues underlying homelessness on the Sunshine Coast and what strategies will you implement in the next term, if elected?

We believe that housing insecurity is the primary cause of homelessness in the Sunshine Coast. We believe that this insecurity arises from two primary factors: a lack of housing supply and complex social issues that exacerbate the situation. Understanding these contributors is essential for developing effective strategies to address homelessness.

If elected, we will leverage our comprehensive Homes for Queenslanders plan to address both immediate housing needs and the underlying causes of housing insecurity, ultimately working towards ending homelessness in Queensland.

#### Housing Insecurity Due to Lack of Supply

The shortage of housing supply and diversity is a major driver of housing insecurity, particularly in the Sunshine Coast, where rapid population growth has increased demand. With a growth rate of 2.8% from 2022 to 2023, the region faces heightened competition for limited housing options, compounded by national pressures like rising interest rates and labor shortages. This imbalance has led to low rental vacancy rates and rising prices, making it increasingly difficult for lower-income earners to secure stable housing. When residents spend over 30% of their income on housing, this pushes them closer to financial instability and increases the risk of homelessness.

To address these challenges, we will utilize our \$350 million Incentivising Infill Development Fund to support rapid residential development in well-located areas, minimising costs and expediting project completion. Additionally, we are providing \$12.5 million in targeted funding to local governments for strategic planning that promotes affordable housing development. As the Sunshine Coast continues to grow, we will collaborate with the council to implement local planning solutions aligned with *ShapingSEQ 2023* policies and housing supply and diversity targets. To enhance market access for first-time buyers, we have doubled the First Home Owner Grant to \$30,000 and raised the first home concession threshold on transfer duty to \$700,000. To support renters in this tight market, we are limiting the frequency of rent increases and implementing a \$160 million Renters Relief Package to assist with bond payments and rental costs.

#### Housing Insecurity Due to Complex Issues

Housing insecurity is further exacerbated by complex social issues that hinder individuals' ability to maintain stable housing. Factors such as financial instability, domestic violence, mental health challenges, and past trauma create a cycle of vulnerability, making it difficult for affected individuals to secure and sustain stable homes. For example, job loss or rising living costs can leave people unable to afford rent, while those facing domestic violence may have to leave their homes without safe alternatives.

To strengthen the safety net for those at risk of homelessness, we are increasing funding for Specialist Homelessness Services by 20%, expanding short-term temporary accommodation, establishing critical response teams across Queensland and providing targeted support for First Nations peoples and young people.

In contrast the TLNP's housing policies lack clarity and specificity, failing to provide a comprehensive commitment to ending homelessness in Queensland. The Miles Labor Government has established a robust framework through the Homes for Queenslanders plan, which focuses on addressing both immediate needs and the underlying causes of housing insecurity which lead to homelessness.

8. How will you seek to facilitate greater availability of affordable housing and improve the abysmally low amount of social housing on the Sunshine Coast?

We will leverage our \$350 million Incentivising Infill Development Fund to support rapid residential development in well-located areas, minimising costs and facilitating faster project completion. Additionally, we are providing \$12.5 million in targeted funding to local governments to enhance strategic planning and update planning schemes, ensuring that local needs are met while promoting affordable housing development. We will work closely with the Sunshine Coast Council to implement local planning solutions that align with *ShapingSEQ 2023* policies and housing supply and diversity targets.

Our commitment to social housing remains strong, with the Homes for Queenslanders plan aiming to deliver 53,500 new social homes by 2046. To help meet this target, we're providing \$1.25 billion over the next 5 years to help deliver more than 2,000 social homes, on average, every year from 2028. In the Sunshine Coast region alone, we have successfully delivered 370 homes across various programs, including significant partnerships with Registered Community Housing Providers. Currently, 47 homes are under construction, and 164 homes are under contract for future delivery.

These combined efforts will ensure that both affordable and social housing needs are met, providing safe and stable living options for the Sunshine Coast community.

## Infrastructure

9. The delivery cost and capacity of the proposed Direct Rail Project are publicly debated between parties.

a) By 2032, how far are you committing for the direct heavy rail line to go, and where will the stations be located?

Our government is already committed to building Stage One of the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line to Caloundra, with market sounding currently being conducted to Birtinya.

Preliminary works are underway including geotechnical investigations, and environmental surveys. We've also opened a Direct Sunshine Coast Rail information centre, to inform everyone of the project's benefits to help increase housing along the line, as well as deliver better public transport connections in the region.

The current \$5.5 billion in funding also includes seeking environmental approvals for Stage 2 between Caloundra and Birtinya, should market feedback show building to Birtinya by 2032 is feasible.

But the business case for the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line shows that even when staged or built concurrently, construction of the dual track rail line to Maroochydore would not be feasible prior to 2032. This is advice of expert industry advisors who gave their input to the business case.

Our plan stands in complete contrast to David Crisafulli and the LNP, who refuse to tell the people of the Sunshine Coast how they can possibly build twice as much rail line in the same time, and where they will find nearly \$7 billion to pay for it.

b) How can we be confident that you can deliver this project in time and on budget?

Progressive delivery of this project will allow the community to start using the rail line sooner. It creates a progressive pipeline for thousands of local jobs and helps ease construction impacts on the local area.

The business case demonstrated that delivery of rail between Beerwah and Maroochydore is anticipated to take a decade or more, even when working across multiple work fronts at the same time. Without staging, no sections of the rail corridor would be able to be operational before construction to Maroochydore was completed.

10. Will you commit to reviewing Public Transport timetables for the Sunshine Coast from the hinterland to the Nambour Hospital, Sunshine Coast Airport, Peregrin Springs and other locations across the Coast currently with hourly services?

The Miles Labor Government has committed \$6.5 million towards the \$16.5 million Sunshine Coast Public Transport detailed business case for an integrated urban public transport solution for the Sunshine Coast. TMR's work builds on the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project undertaken by Sunshine Coast Regional Council. The business case for Stage 1 of the project at Maroochydore and the Sunshine Coast University Hospital at Birtinya is continuing and is expected to be completed in mid-2025.

The business case is investigating options to provide enhanced high quality and frequent bus services between Maroochydore and Caloundra, including to service the new Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line Caloundra Station.

The project will ensure an integrated network solution, enabling new bus routes, additional trips and longer operating hours to continue to improve connections between stations, key destinations and areas across the Sunshine Coast.

The project will deliver on the vision of the Southern Sunshine Coast Public Transport Strategy and has been identified as a strategic connector to enable intra-regional travel to key coastal tourism, health and business precincts along the Coastal Corridor.

11. Will you commit to ensuring that Active Transport is provided progressively across the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, will you campaign for State funding for the Nambour to Coolumbur Trail and the Mapleton to Maleny trail as a landmark Olympics Legacy projects for the Sunshine Coast?

The Miles Government has committed \$315 million from 2024–25 to 2027–28 towards standalone active transport initiatives, including bikeways, shared paths, and bridges across the state. The Miles Government recent committed \$280,000 for design of the separated cycle track on Stringybark Road, Ballinger Road to Sunshine Motorway, design separated cycle track.

A re-elected Miles Government would welcome an application from the local Council for these trails to our existing grant programs where they can be assessed against state-wide priorities.

12. Do you agree that heritage, natural environment, cultural values and the values of the Sunshine Coast and Noosa Biosphere designations must be acknowledged, respected and taken into account in any major new infrastructure projects to protect the character of our villages and towns and unique fauna, for example, fauna friendly underpasses/overpasses?

The heritage, natural environment, cultural values and the values of the Sunshine Coast and Noosa Biosphere are both unique and important and will be taken into account when designing and delivering new infrastructure projects. This includes a commitment to protecting and supporting our native wildlife through various fauna management initiatives including fauna friendly infrastructure like under and overpasses.

Another great example is the launch of 'Koalas on the Move' driver awareness campaign during the 2023 koala breeding season in the Noosa region, in collaboration with the Noosa Biosphere Reserve and other local stakeholders. This campaign played a crucial role in preventing koala fatalities on key roads in the North Coast Region during this sensitive time for the species.

13. Seqwater's Water Security Program 2023 (WSP2023) sets out a 30-year plan to ensure we continue to maintain high levels of water security for South East Queenslanders.

What do you feel is the best approach to ensuring water security for the Sunshine Coast given the continuing high rates of population growth and the implications of Climate Change?

The latest update to the South-East Queensland Water Security Program was published by the Queensland Government's bulk water provider Seqwater in October 2023. This important document is a 30-year blueprint for water security in South-East Queensland (SEQ). Three major pieces of infrastructure are proposed as long-term solutions to meet future population growth and respond to climate change. These include:

- connecting Wyaralong Dam to the SEQ water grid
- expanding the Gold Coast Desalination Plant; and
- investigating a new desalination plant in South-East Queensland.

Detailed business cases and investigations are under way for these proposed projects. Across the state, including in SEQ, Labor will always listen to the experts and make sure water projects always stack up, environmentally and economically. To ensure this, all water infrastructure is subject to rigorous assessment prior to investment decision, this includes the development of a detailed business case.

The Miles Labor Government continues to encourage the use of non-potable recycled water in Queensland for non-consumptive uses. There are around 170 non-potable recycled water networks across the state – including on the Sunshine Coast and in Moreton Bay. These schemes are a responsible way to make water available for uses such as watering sporting fields, conserving potable water for potable use.

The Miles Labor Government, through the Water Department has a range of communications materials and supports Councils and water providers with their own water efficiency and demand management activities. Many councils, including Seqwater, as the Bulk Water Provider for South-East Queensland, have a suite of campaign materials to encourage residents to be water wise. This includes water saving tips on their website. Several water providers, including



Unitywater, also have information stalls at community events or have a school program to support water efficiency.

## Local/State Government Reform

14. In the interests of consistency, will you support the State funding of Local Government Elections under a similar model to that of the State Elections?

The model for local government elections aligns closely with the framework established under the *Electoral Act 1992*.

**Thank you for taking the time to respond to our questions. Responses will be posted on the OSCAR website as part of our "one-stop shop" for elections.**